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EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

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71 Applicant: Siemens Aktiengesellschaft
Berlin und München Wittelsbacherplatz 2
D-8000 München 2(DE)

72 Inventor: Persyk, Dennis E.
28385 West Arch Drive
Barrington Illinois 60010(US)

72 Inventor: Stoub, Everett W.
719 West Terrace
Villa Park Illinois 60181(US)

54 Radiation detector with bonded camera optics.

57 A method and a device are provided for replaceably connecting in a radiation detector a photomultiplier tube having a bottom with a scintillation crystal assembly. An adhesive is applied solely between the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and the scintillation crystal assembly which adhesive after curing will be light transparent and elastic. Then the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and the scintillation crystal assembly are coupled together such that after the curing of the adhesive an elastic bond is provided between the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and scintillation crystal assembly which is stable enough to prevent spontaneous decoupling however which is elastic enough to be easily shearable by means of a shearing tool for the purpose of demounting the photomultiplier tube.

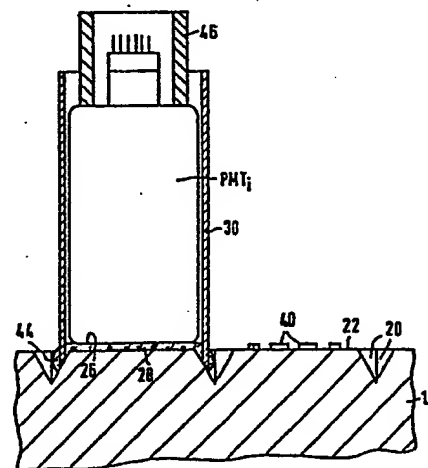


FIG 6

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the invention

This invention relates to a method for replaceably connecting in a radiation detector a photomultiplier tube with a scintillation crystal assembly. The invention also relates to a radiation detector for which photomultiplier tubes, if desired or necessary can easily be replaced. Furthermore, the invention relates to a method and device for easily demounting in a radiation detector a photomultiplier tube. A preferred field of application of the invention is a scintillation gamma camera as radiation detector, which comprises a plurality of photomultiplier tubes connected with a scintillation crystal assembly.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Conventional radiation detectors which comprise merely one photomultiplier tube normally make use of epoxy resin as adhesive for coupling the sole photomultiplier tube to the scintillation crystal assembly. Epoxy resin, however provides a rigid bond (see for example the brochure Harshaw Scintillation Phosphors D-4450 of the Harshaw Chemical Company, Crystal & Electronic Products Department, Solon, Ohio, page 43, left column, lines 3 and 4). Due to this, in the case the sole photomultiplier tube becomes defective, a decoupling and replacement of the latter one is not possible. Thus usually the complete radiation detector comprising the defective photomultiplier tube and the scintillation crystal assembly has to be thrown away.

This procedure, however is not practicable for those radiation detectors which comprise a plurality of photomultiplier tubes, such as for example for a scintillation gamma camera. It would become too expensive to throw away a complete camera head merely for that reason that one sole photomultiplier tube had become defective. Due to this in conventional radiation detectors such as scintillation gamma cameras which comprise an assembly of photomultiplier tubes, use is made of an silicone compound with grease-like properties (e.g. silicone oil as for example described in section 2.1 of the brochure "OKEN Synthetic Optical Crystals and Scintillation Phosphors" of Ohyo Koken Kogyo Co., Tokyo, Japan) as optical coupling medium for coupling the photomultiplier tubes with the scintillation crystal assembly. This conventional optical coupling compound, however remains semi-fluid and requires mechanical constraint and pressure loading to reduce the rate of spontaneous decoupling, as described for example in the U.S. Patents 3,723,735 and 4,280,051, where the photomultiplier tubes have to be spring biased. Even with extensive care, spontaneous decoupling occurs occasionally after installation of a detector unit.

According to the U.S. Patent 4,029,964 other light transparent adhesives, such as for example silicone rubber, have been practiced within an scintillation crystal assembly to couple a light conduction element such as a light pipe with a bilateral glass cover disc for the scintillation crystal. The light transparent silicone rubber is applied in liquid or gel form and is thereafter cured. However, to secure the photomultiplier tubes in optical communication with the light conducting element of the scintillation crystal assembly again a conventional grease-like optical coupling compound is used to couple the photomultiplier tubes with the scintillation crystal assembly.

A radiation detector, which comprises two scintillation crystals which are bonded by means of a resilient silicone rubber compound to a photomultiplier tube is described in the U.S. Patent 4,323,778. However, as shown in Fig. 3 of this U.S. patent both the scintillation crystals and the photomultiplier tube are completely embedded in the silicone rubber compound. A decoupling of the photomultiplier tube is only possible by destroying of the complete assembly of photomultiplier tube and scintillation crystal. As namely described on page 1, lines 29 to 30 of the German laid-open specification 2,519,034 or as mentioned in col. 1, lines 42 and 47, 48 of the U.S. patent 2,996,419 silicone rubber despite its casting elasticity has a very high adhesive strength. Thus a decoupling without destruction of photomultiplier tube and/or scintillation crystal assembly seemed to be unimaginable.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION1. Objects

5 It is an object of this invention to provide an improved method for replaceably connecting in a radiation detector a photomultiplier tube with a scintillation crystal assembly.

10 It is another object of this invention to provide an improved radiation detector for which photomultiplier tubes if desired or necessary can easily be replaced.

2. Summary

15

According to this invention a method is provided for replaceably connecting in a radiation detector a photomultiplier tube with a scintillation crystal assembly, comprising the steps of:

20

a) applying solely between the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and the scintillation crystal assembly an adhesive which after curing will be light transparent and elastic; and

25

b) coupling the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and the scintillation crystal assembly together such that after the curing of the adhesive an elastic bond is provided between the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and scintillation crystal assembly which is stable enough to prevent spontaneous decoupling however which is elastic enough to be easily shearable by means of a shearing

30

tool for the purpose of demounting the photomultiplier tube.

Also according to this invention a radiation detector is provided
5 which comprises:

a) a scintillation crystal assembly; and

b) a photomultiplier tube having a bottom;

10

wherein solely the bottom of the photomultiplier tube is bonded by means of a light transparent elastic adhesive to the scintillation crystal assembly.

15 The light transparent elastic adhesive is preferably a silicone rubber compound.

According to this invention use is made of an elastic light
transparent adhesive to bond solely the bottom of a photomultiplier
20 tube with a scintillation crystal assembly. The light transparent adhesive is strong enough to prevent spontaneous decoupling of the photomultiplier tube. Spring biasing of the multiplier tubes or other pressure loading, such as by means of a nest, plungers and rack is no longer necessary. This reduces mechanical complexity and
25 cost and removes excess pressure loading onto the fragile scintillation crystal. The bond produced by that light transparent adhesive is also elastic enough to conform to differential expansion rates with temperatures, which the materials of photomultiplier tube and scintillation crystal assembly provide. Furthermore the bond is
30 elastic enough to be easily shearable by means of a simple shearing tool, such as for example a thread, for the purpose of demounting the photomultiplier tube. The thread can be placed around the bond

between photomultiplier tube and scintillation crystal assembly.
Then the thread can be drawn such that it shears the bond.

In a preferred embodiment of this invention a silicone rubber compound is used as adhesive, which has a transmission of greater than 0.8 through 1 cm at 400nm wavelengths and a moderate refractive index from about 1.4 to 1.6 at 400 nm. Such a silicone rubber adhesive is available for example from General Electric Company, Silicone Products Division, RTV Products Department, Waterford, New York 12188 under the name RTV 615 or RTV 655 (see General Electric's brochure CDS-1870A "RTV Silicone Rubber Product Data RTV 615, RTV 655 and RTV 670, High Strangth Transport Silicone Rubber Compounds"). Other usable silicone rubber adhesives are for example the Sylgard^R Silicone Elastomers 182 or 184 available from the Dow Corning Corporation, Midland, Michigan 48640 (see page 22 of Dow Corning's brochure "Materials for High Technology Applications").

The foregoing and other objects, features and advantages of the invention will be apparent from the following more particular description of preferred embodiments of the invention, as illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the drawings:

5 Fig. 1 shows a top view of a scintillation crystal assembly in a detector head, such as a scintillation gamma camera;

Fig. 2 shows the scintillation crystal assembly of Fig. 1 in a cross section;

10

Fig. 3 shows in an enlargement of a partial section of the scintillation crystal assembly of Fig. 1 the step of applying spacers and the step of applying an adhesive on the upper surface of the scintillation crystal assembly;

15

Fig. 4 shows the same steps as in Fig. 3 in a cross section of the enlargement;

20

Fig. 5 shows in the cross section of the enlargement the step of placing a photomultiplier tube and the step of placing a shield for the photomultiplier tube on the upper surface of the scintillation crystal assembly;

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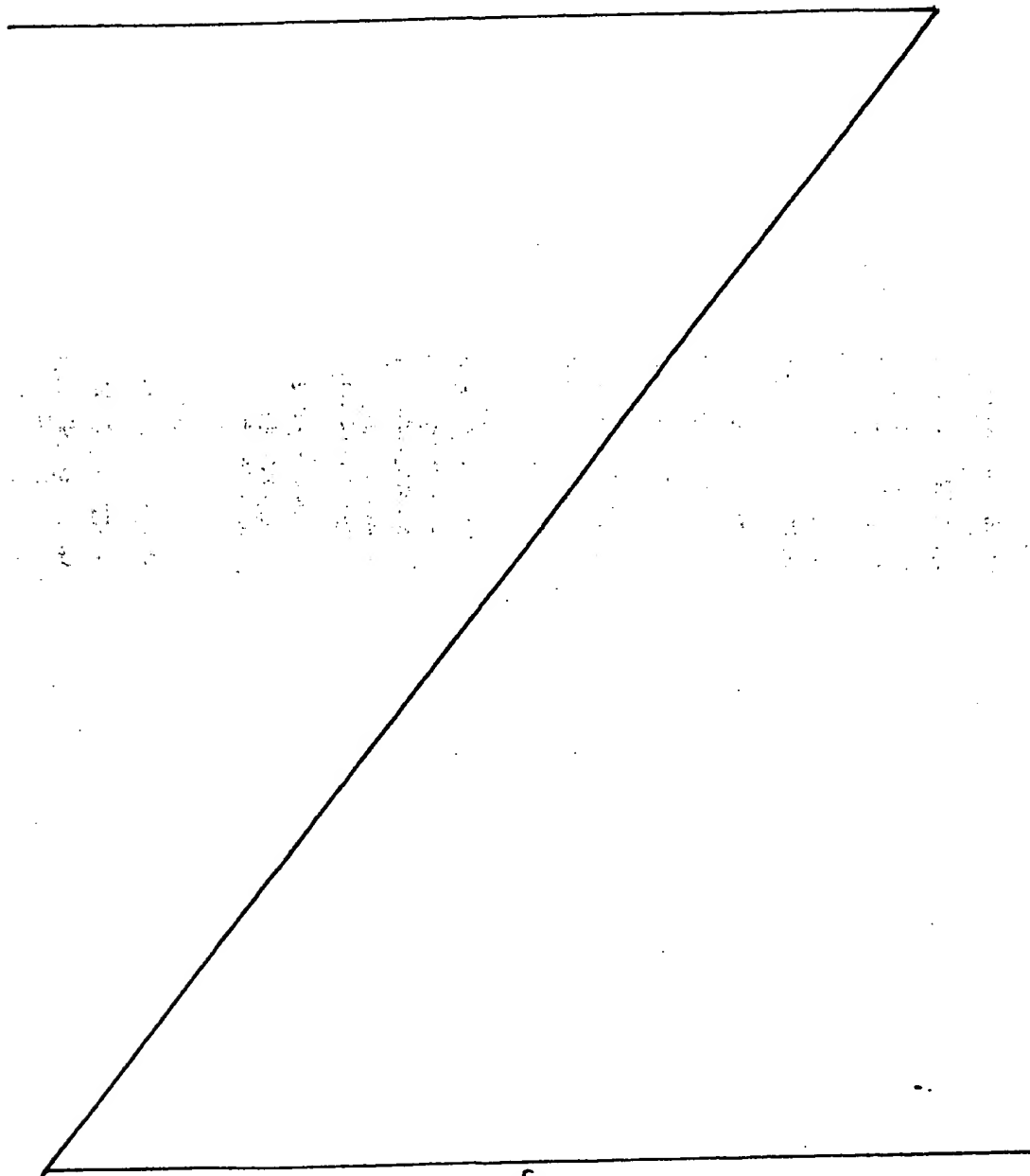
Fig. 6 shows in the cross section of the enlargement the step of coupling the photomultiplier tube with the upper surface of the scintillation crystal assembly by gravity action and the step of fixing the shield by means of an adhesive ring;

30

Fig. 7 shows modified steps of applying spacers and an adhesive on the upper surface of the scintillation crystal assembly;

Fig. 8 shows the steps of placing a photomultiplier tube and a shield succeeding the steps of Fig. 7; and

Fig. 9 shows a simple method for decoupling a photomultiplier tube
5 by means of a thread.



DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In Figs. 1 and 2 the scintillation crystal assembly 10, which has hexagonal shape, comprises a scintillation crystal 12 (e.g. NaI(Tl)), an aluminum cover 14, a glass disc 16 and a light pipe 18 (e.g. acrylic plastic). The light pipe 18 is sculptured by means of circular grooves 20 into (e.g. 37) circular pads 22 and interstices 24. On each pad 22 a photomultiplier tube PMT1 to PMTN has to be placed. Thus a detector head (e.g. gamma camera head) will be created, which comprises for example a total of $N = 37$ photomultiplier tubes. Merely three (of e.g. $N = 37$) photomultiplier tubes are shown in Figs. 1 and 2 for illustrating purpose.

Each photomultiplier tube PMT1 to PMTN has a bottom 26 and is bonded with its bottom 26 to a corresponding pad 22 by means of an elastic light transparent silicone rubber compound according to this invention. In Fig. 2 the silicone rubber bond is indicated with the numeral 28. Also each photomultiplier tube PMT1 to PMTN is protected from external magnetic fields by a shield 30 of mumetal. The electrical wires 32 of each photomultiplier tube PMT1 to PMTN form a harness (not shown) for electrical connection.

A method for replaceably bonding each photomultiplier tube PMT1 to PMTN to a corresponding pad 22 of the light pipe 18 according to this invention is described with respect to Figs. 3 to 6.

Fig. 3 shows in an enlargement of a partial section of the scintillation crystal assembly 10 of Fig. 1 pads 22 on each of which a plurality of small spacers 40 (each of them about 1 mm thick) have been applied in a first method step (after having previously cleaned the pads with methylalcohol for example). The spacers 40 are

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determined for providing a uniformly thick (e.g. 1 mm) bond between the bottom of a photomultiplier tube and the corresponding pad.

5 The spacers 40 are casted of the same silicone rubber compound which will be used to form the bond. For this purpose at first a disc of the silicone rubber compound is casted, which has the desired later thickness of the bond. From this disc small pieces are cut which form the spacers.

10 This kind of spacers is advantageous, as they are produced of the same material as the adhesive of the later bond. Thus these spacers have exactly the same optical characteristics as the bond.

15 Fig. 4 shows the second step of the inventive method. In this step a drop 42 of silicone rubber compound is applied to one of the pads 22. The silicone rubber compound is RTV 615 of General Electric. As described in the brochure Product Data CDS-1870 A ten parts of the A component and one part of the B component have previously been mixed and stirred in a container such as to produce a homogeneous
20 mixture free of air bubbles. The drop 42 derives from this mixture. The drop 42 of silicone rubber compound has such a volume that after placing a photomultiplier tube PMT_1 on the pad and weighing down the photomultiplier tube by means of weight the drop of silicone rubber compound spreads across the pad leaving a thin ring of
25 adhesive overtopping the bottom of the photomultiplier tube.

This ring produced by the third and fourth method steps of placing and weighing down the photomultiplier tube is indicated in Figs. 5 and 6 with the reference numeral 44.

30

The step of weighing down the photomultiplier tube PMT_1 is shown in more detail in Fig. 6. A weight 46 (for example lead cylinder)

is positioned on the neck of the tube such that the bottom 26 of the photomultiplier tube PMT_1 is bonded by gravity action to the pad 22 of the light pipe 18 of the scintillation crystal assembly 10.

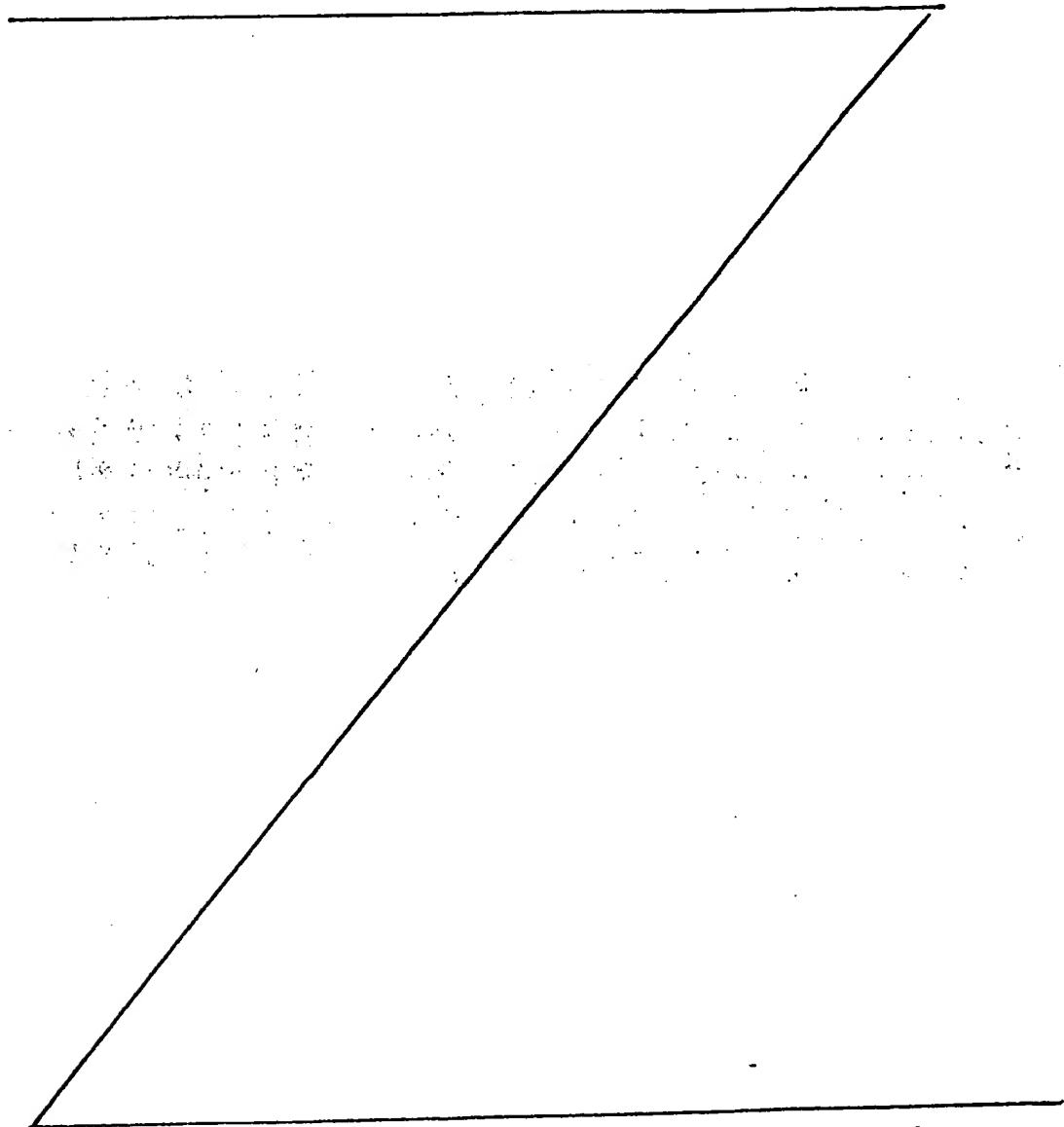
The adhesive ring 44 overtopping the bottom of the photomultiplier tube is provided for fixing the shield 30 for the tube in a fifth method step. Before curing of the silicone rubber compound the cylindrical shield 30 of mumetal is slipped over the photomultiplier tube PMT_1 in the direction of the arrow 48 as indicated in Fig. 5 and finally inserted with its lower end into the adhesive ring 44 as shown in Fig. 6. After the curing of the adhesive the shield is firmly positioned in the adhesive ring.

Figs. 7 and 8 indicate a modified version of applying spacers and adhesive to a pad. In this version small glass beads as spacers of about 1 mm diameter have previously been mixed with the silicone rubber compound. Such the adhesive drop 50 of Fig. 7 contains a plurality of fine glass beads 52 which spread together with the adhesive across the pad when placing the photomultiplier tube PMT_1 . The glass bead spacers have optical characteristics which are very similar to the optical characteristics of the silicone rubber compound forming the bond 28.

Fig. 9 shows a simple method for demounting a photomultiplier tube PMT_1 by means of a thread 60 (e.g. music wire of about 0.01 to 0.03 inch diameter). After having removed the shield 30 by pulling the shield in a direction contrary to the arrow 48 in Fig. 5 the thread 60 is placed around the bond 28 at the upper surface of the silicone rubber ring 44 such that it forms a noose 62. The thread ends 64 are wrapped around the lower end of a rod 66 as shown in Fig. 9. When twisting the rod 66 at its upper end in direction of the arrow 68 around its longitudinal axis 70 the thread continues to wind around the rod thereby making the loop smaller and shearing the bond. Thus a defective photomultiplier tube can easily be replaced.

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Having thus described the invention with particular reference to the preferred forms thereof, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art to which the invention pertains, after understanding the invention, that various changes and modifications may be made
5 therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined by the claims appended hereto.



WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- 1 1. A method for replaceably connecting in a radiation detector a
2 photomultiplier tube having a bottom with a scintillation crystal
3 assembly, comprising the steps of:
 - 4 a) applying solely between the bottom of the
5 photomultiplier tube and the scintillation crystal assembly
6 an adhesive which after curing will be light transparent and
7 elastic; and
 - 8 b) coupling the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and the
9 scintillation crystal assembly together such that after the
10 curing of the adhesive an elastic bond is provided between
11 the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and scintillation
12 crystal assembly which is stable enough to prevent
13 spontaneous decoupling however which is elastic enough to be
14 easily shearable by means of a shearing tool for the purpose
15 of demounting the photomultiplier tube.
- 1 2. A method according to claim 1, comprising further the step
2 of applying spacers between the bottom of the photomultiplier tube
3 and the scintillation crystal assembly such that the bond becomes
4 uniformly thick.
- 1 3. A method according to claim 2, wherein the spacers are
2 applied before applying the adhesive.
- 1 4. A method according to claim 2, wherein the spacers are
2 a) mixed with the adhesive; and

3 b) applied together with the adhesive

1 5. A method according to claim 2, wherein the spacers are
2 casted of the same adhesive which is used to form the bond.

1 6. A method according to claim 5 comprising the steps of:

2 a) casting a disc of the adhesive, which has the desired
3 thickness of the bond; and

4 b) cutting the disc into small pieces, which form the
5 spacers.

1 7. A method according to claim 2, wherein small glass beads are
2 used as spacers, which beads have a diameter equal to the desired
3 bond thickness.

1 8. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps
2 of:

3 a) applying between bottom of the photomultiplier tube and
4 scintillation crystal assembly the adhesive such that after
5 coupling a thin ring of adhesive overtopping the bottom of
6 the photomultiplier tube is produced; and

7 b) inserting into the thin ring of overtopping adhesive
8 before curing thereof a magnetic shield for the
9 photomultiplier tube.

1 9. A method according to claim 1, wherein the scintillation
2 crystal assembly comprises as an upper layer a light pipe, further
3 comprising the steps of:

4 a) applying solely between the bottom of the
5 photomultiplier tube and the light pipe of the scintillation
6 crystal assembly the adhesive; and

7 b) coupling the bottom of the photomultiplier tube and the
8 light pipe together.

1 10. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of weighing down the photomultiplier tube by means of weight after
3 coupling such that the bottom of the photomultiplier tube is bonded
4 by gravity action to the scintillation crystal assembly.

1 11. A method according to claim 1, making use by a silicon
2 rubber compound as the adhesive.

1 12. A method according to claim 1, further comprising the step
2 of coupling a plurality of photomultiplier tubes with a
3 scintillation crystal assembly by means of the adhesive.

1 13. A radiation detector, comprising:

2 a) a scintillation crystal assembly; and

3 b) a photomultiplier tube having a bottom;

4 wherein solely the bottom of the photomultiplier tube is bonded by
5 means of a light transparent elastic adhesive to the scintillation
6 crystal assembly.

1 14. A radiation detector according to claim 13, comprising a
2 plurality of photomultiplier tubes the bottom of each of these
3 photomultiplier tubes is bonded by means of the adhesive to the

4 scintillation crystal assembly.

1 15. A radiation detector according to claim 13, further
2 comprising:

3 a) a magnetic shield for the photomultiplier tube; and

4 b) a ring of adhesive overtopping the bottom of the
5 photomultiplier tube;

6 wherein said magnetic shield is fixed in said ring of adhesive.

1 16. A radiation detector according to claim 13, wherein

2 a) the scintillation crystal assembly comprises as an upper
3 layer a light pipe; and

4 b) the bottom of the photomultiplier tube is coupled to the
5 light pipe by means of the adhesive.

1 17. A radiation detector according to claim 16, further
2 comprising:

3 a) a light pipe which is sculptured into pads and grooves
4 each of the pads having a pad area; and

5 b) a plurality of photomultiplier tubes each of them having
6 a bottom with a bottom area being at least slightly larger
7 than the pad area;

8 wherein each of the photomultiplier tubes is coupled by means of the
9 adhesive to an associate pad of the light pipe.

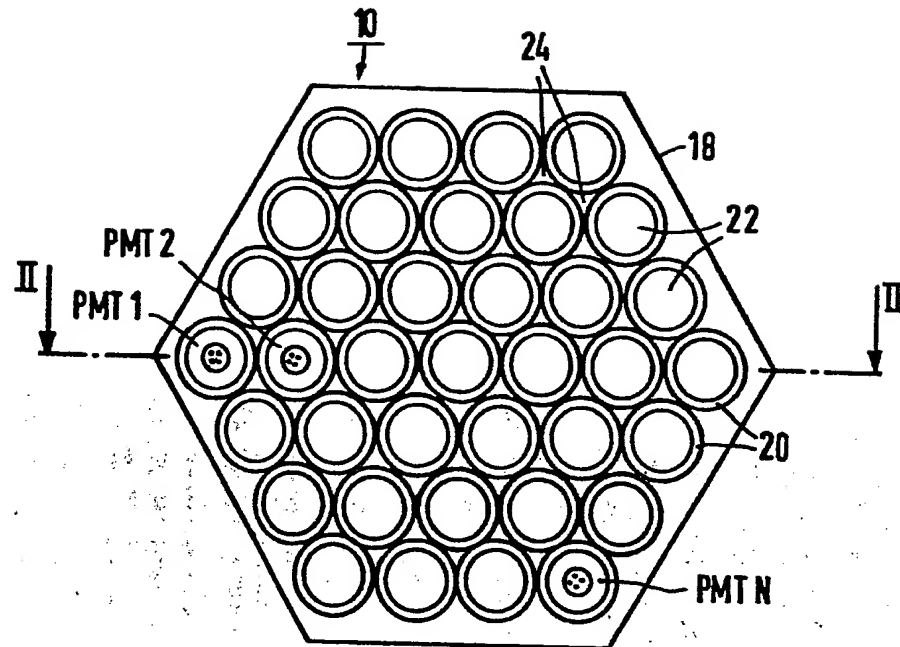


FIG 1

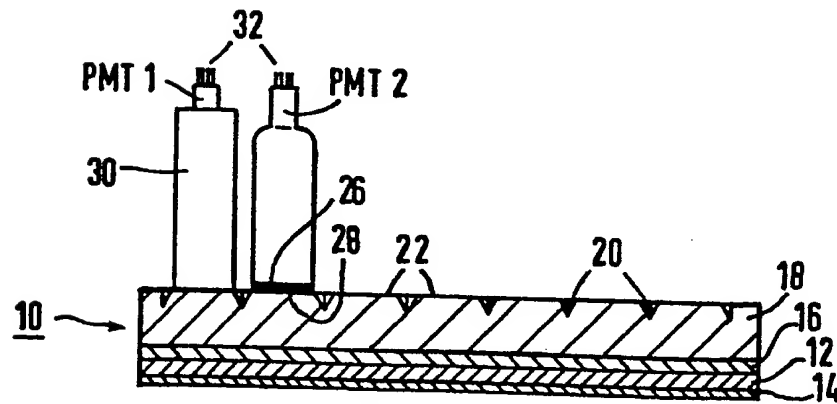


FIG 2

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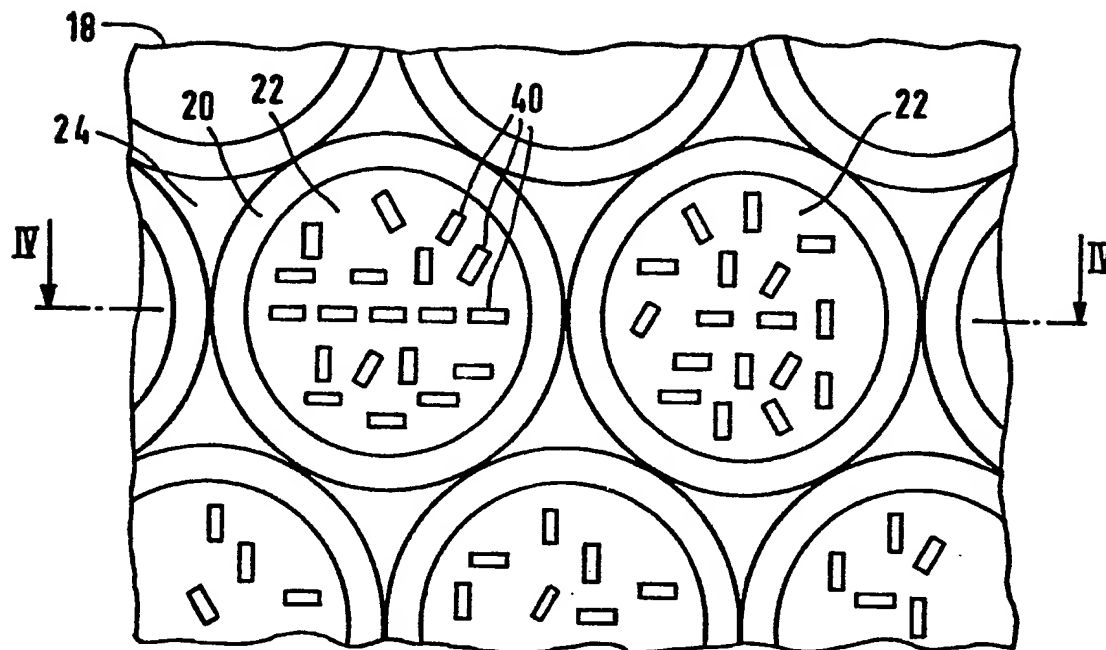


FIG 3

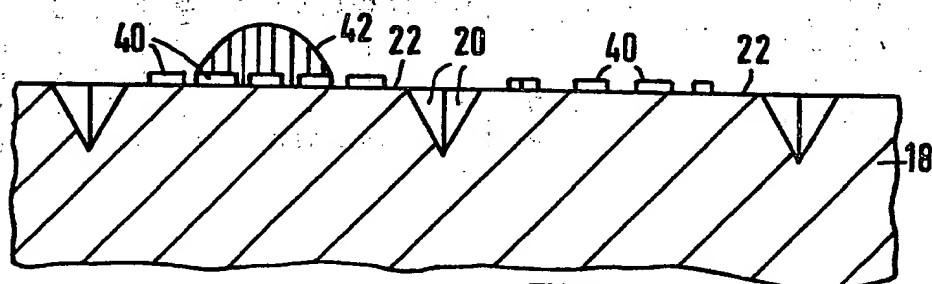


FIG 4

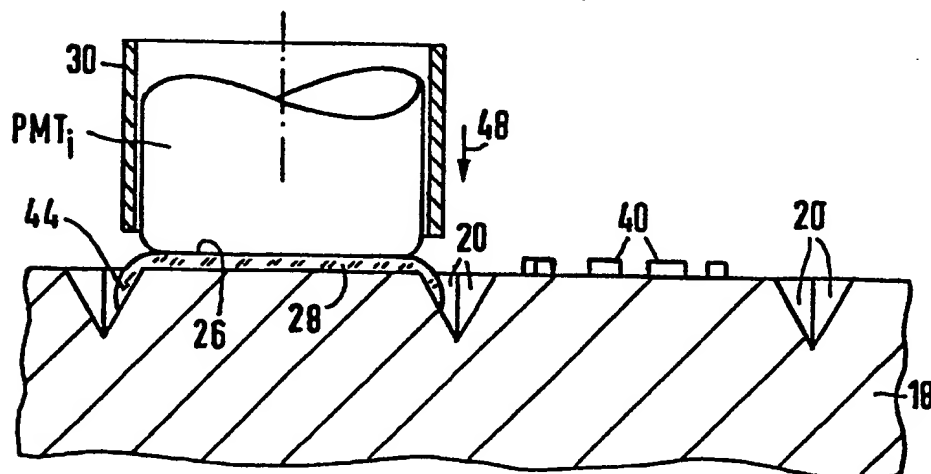


FIG 5

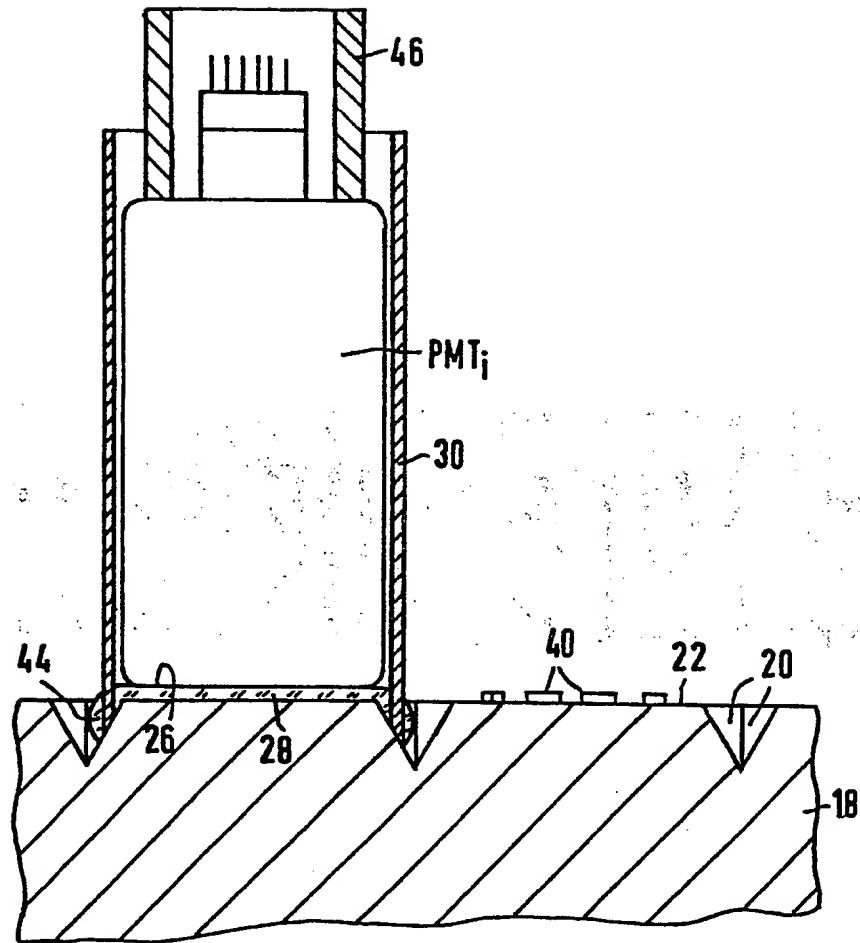


FIG 6

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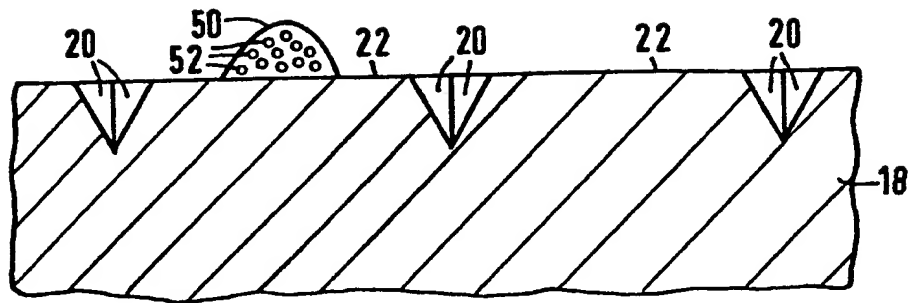


FIG 7

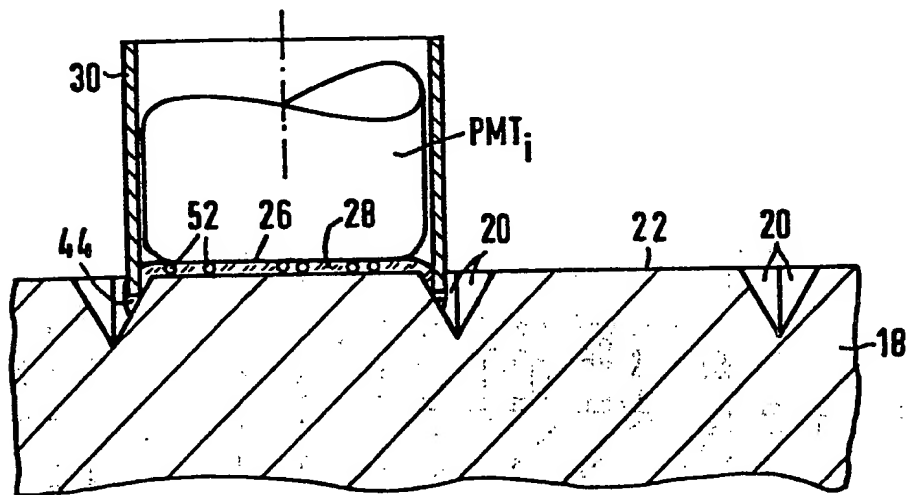


FIG 8

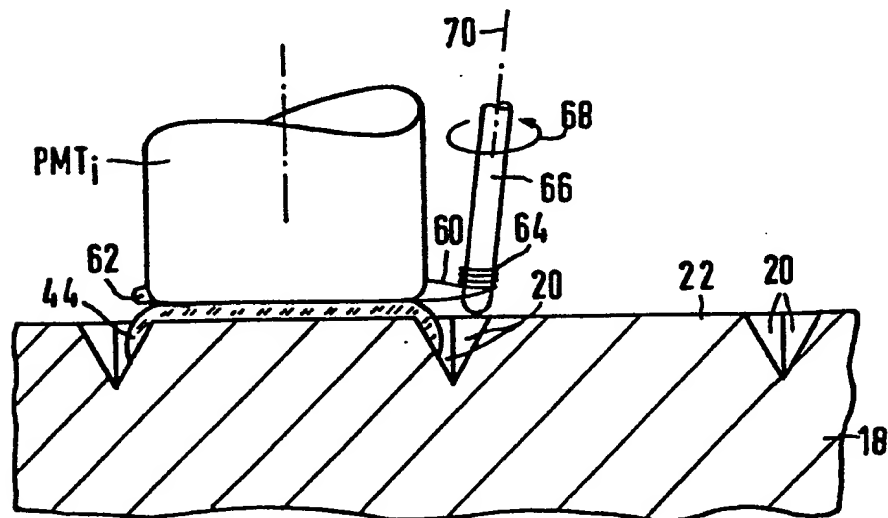


FIG 9



European Patent
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

0129682

Application number

EP 84 10 5207

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 3)
Y	JAPANESE JOURNAL OF APPLIED PHYSICS, vol. 10, no. 11, November 1971, pages 1597-1600, Tokyo, JP; S. FUKUI et al.: "Flexible adiabatic light guide of silicon rubber" * pages 1597-1598; table II *	1-3, 7, 9, 11	G 01 T 1/20 G 01 T 1/164
A	--- IDEM	16	
Y	--- GB-A-2 049 973 (A.A. THORNTON & CO.) * abstract; page 1, lines 7-12, 33-49, 61-70, 93-122; figures *	1-3, 7, 9, 11	
A	--- THE REVIEW OF SCIENTIFIC INSTRUMENTS, vol. 23, no. 9, September 1952, pages 503-504, New York, US; R.K. SWANK et al.: "A versatile laboratory scintillation counter" * pages 503-504 *	1, 8, 9, 13, 15	TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 3) G 01 T G 02 F
A	--- US-A-3 087 060 (OMOHUNDOR et al.) * column 1, line 65 - column 2, line 7; column 2, line 36 - column 3, line 54; figures 1, 2 *	1, 13, 14	
A	--- US-A-3 752 981 (R.J. JASZCZAK) * column 2, lines 44-62; figure 2 *	9, 17	
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search THE HAGUE		Date of completion of the search 17-09-1984	Examiner DATTA S.
<p>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</p> <p>X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document</p> <p>T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document</p>			